

U.S. Patent Application No.: 10/840,214, Filed: May 5, 2004
PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Canceled)
2. (New) A method of preserving slaughtered birds or parts thereof provided with skin, the method comprising:
 - a. conveying product carriers through at least a portion of a chilling room, wherein each product carrier carries only one slaughtered bird or part thereof and wherein at least some of the slaughtered birds or parts thereof are conveyed through at least a portion of the chilling room in different horizontal planes;
 - b. chilling each slaughtered bird or part thereof by exposing the slaughtered bird or part thereof to a stream of chilling air in the chilling room; and
 - c. moistening at least a portion of each slaughtered bird or part thereof by atomization of water, wherein the moistening of each slaughtered bird or part thereof occurs when the slaughtered bird or part thereof is not exposed to the stream of chilling air and comprises applying a water film to the skin of the slaughtered bird or part thereof, the water film covering substantially the entirety of the skin of the slaughtered bird or part thereof and being maintained on the skin during chilling.
3. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the slaughtered birds or parts thereof are conveyed hanging by both legs during moistening.
4. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the slaughtered birds or parts thereof comprise an abdominal cavity and wherein moistening comprises applying a water film to at least a portion of the abdominal cavity of the slaughtered birds or parts thereof.
5. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the water comprises an antibacterial agent.

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6. (New) The method of claim 5, wherein the antibacterial agent comprises lactic acid.
7. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein moistening at least a portion of each slaughtered bird or part thereof occurs periodically.
8. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein moistening at least a portion of each slaughtered bird or part thereof occurs approximately every 3 to 15 minutes.
9. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein moistening at least a portion of each slaughtered bird or part thereof occurs less frequently the further the slaughtered bird or part thereof is conveyed.
10. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the water is electrostatically charged during its atomization.
11. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein approximately 10 to 25 grams of water are used to moisten each slaughtered bird or part thereof.
12. (New) The method of claim 2, further comprising assessing the color of the skin of each slaughtered bird or part thereof during processing and controlling moistening of the slaughtered bird or part thereof based on the assessment.
13. (New) The method of claim 2, further comprising immersing at least some of the slaughtered birds or parts thereof in a bath comprising chilled water or spraying at least some of the slaughtered birds or parts thereof with chilled water before chilling.
14. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the chilling air has a temperature of less than 3° Celsius.

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15. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the chilling air has a temperature of less than 0° Celsius.

16. (New) A device for preserving slaughtered birds or parts thereof having skin, the device comprising:

- a. a chilling room comprising means for generating a stream of chilling air;
- b. a conveyor for conveying product carriers in a conveyance direction and along a conveyor path that extends at least partially through the chilling room, wherein each carrier is adapted to carry only one slaughtered bird or part thereof and wherein the conveyor is adapted to convey at least some of the carriers through the chilling room in different horizontal planes; and
- c. a spray means for moistening the skin of each slaughtered bird or part thereof by atomization of water, wherein the spray means is positioned in a spray area separated from the stream of chilling air and is adapted to apply a water film to cover substantially the entirety of the skin of a slaughtered bird or part thereof and to maintain the water film on the slaughtered bird or part thereof during exposure to the chilling air.

17. (New) The device of claim 16, wherein the spray means is positioned at a spray station located outside the chilling room.

18. (New) The device of claim 16, wherein the spray means is positioned at a spray station located in the chilling room, wherein a slaughtered bird or part thereof being moistened at the spray station is separated from the stream of chilling air.

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19. (New) The device of claim 16, wherein the spray means is positioned along the conveyor path at a location where the conveyance direction reverses.